

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 00206 192126Z
ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY
AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 0206

POUCHED ALL OTHER AMCONSULS CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: TRUDEAU TO VISIT QUEBEC CITY, JAN 27-29

1. SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU PLANS TO TRAVEL TO QUEBEC CITY JANUARY 27-29 TO ADDRESS CHAMBRE DU COMMERCE AND TO VISIT TWO VACANT RIDINGS IN AREA. TRUDEAU'S RECEPTION IN QUEBEC CITY MAY AFFECT HOW HE WILL SUBSEQUENTLY PROCEED IN DEFENDING FEDERALIST CAUSE. HIS VISIT TO RIDINGS WILL ENABLE HIM TO GAUGE FEDERAL LIBERAL PROSPECTS IN BY-ELECTIONS, WHICH ARE NOT YET SCHEDULED. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PMO), TRUDEAU WILL VISIT QUEBEC CITY REGION JAN 27-29 TO SPEAK TO A CHAMBRE DU COMMERCE LUNCHEON AND TO VISIT TWO VACANT RIDINGS, LANGELIER AND LOUIS HEBERT. PMO SPOKESMAN INDICATED HE WILL NOT MEET PQ PREMIER LEVESQUE, BUT PRESS REPORTED NUMBER OF PQ MEMBERS OF QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND LUNCHEON. THIS TRIP WILL BE TRUDEAU'S FIRST VISIT TO QUEBEC CITY SINCE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 00206 192126Z

NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION.

3. TOM AXWORTHY, ONE OF PM'S SPECIAL ASSISTANTS, TOLD US THAT, AS "A RARE AND UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE", TRUDEAU IS PERSONALLY DRAFTING HIS OWN NOTES FOR CHAMBRE DU COMMERCE SPEECH AND THAT, THEREFORE, OTHERS IN HIS OFFICE ARE STILL IN DARK ON WHAT TRUDEAU WILL SAY.

SPECIFICALLY, IT IS NOT YET KNOWN WHETHER ADDRESS WILL PRIMARILY BE ON ECONOMY OR WHETHER ADDRESS WILL BE HARD-HITTING DEFENSE OF PM'S LONG-STANDING VIEWS ON FEDERALISM. AXWORTHY EXPRESSED PERSONAL OPINION THAT TRUDEAU RISKS TURNING OFF AUDIENCE IF HE SIMPLY RE-ITERATES "WHAT HE HAS BEEN SAYING FOR LAST 15 YEARS" AND THAT PM MAY OUTLINE MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS IN SPEECHES IN COMING MONTHS. AXWORTHY ADDED "THERE IS ONE GUY IN THIS OFFICE WHO THINKS HE KNOWS MORE ON THIS SUBJECT (QUEBEC) THAN ANYONE ELSE", I.E. TRUDEAU. HE NOTED THAT LAST TIME TRUDEAU SPOKE IN QUEBEC CITY WAS IN MARCH 1976. WHEN HE BLASTED FORMER PREMIER BOURASSA, PARTICULARLY LATTER'S LANGUAGE POLICY AS EMBODIED IN BILL 22, AND THAT, AS HE DID ON THAT OCCASION, TRUDEAU MIGHT ALSO THIS TIME SIZE UP HIS AUDIENCE AND SPEAK EXTEMPORANEOUSLY.

4. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO CONGEN QUEBEC CITY, CHAMBRE DU COMMERCE IS USUALLY RELATIVELY TAME GROUP POLITICALLY, BUT TRUDEAU MAY STILL BE WALKING INTO LION'S DEN BY VISITING QUEBEC NOW WHERE, ACCORDING TO LATEST GALLUP POLL, LIBERAL PARTY POPULARITY IS AT SURPRISINGLY LOW LEVEL. IN ANY CASE, VISIT WILL ENABLE HIM TO GET A FEEL FOR PREVAILING SENTIMENT IN TWO OF FIVE VACANT RIDINGS IN QUEBEC WHERE HE MUST EVENTUALLY CALL BY-ELECTIONS. KIND OF RECEPTION HE RECEIVES DURING HIS TRIP WILL PROBABLY ALSO HAVE IMPACT ON HIS STYLE IN DEFENDING FEDERALIST CAUSE. IF HIS SPEECH IS A TOUGH, HARD-HITTING ATTACK ON SEPARATISM AND A STRONG DEFENSE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 OTTAWA 00206 192126Z

OF A UNITED CANADA AND IF IT IS WELL RECEIVED BY THE AUDIENCE, WE SUSPECT TRUDEAU WILL MAKE OTHER FORWAYS INTO QUEBEC CARRYING THE BATTLE WITH LEVESQUE INTO LATTER'S OWN TERRITORY. IF, ON OTHER HAND, ADDRESS IS NOT FAVORABLY RECEIVED, TRUDEAU MAY RETREAT TO OTTAWA AND TRY TO COMMUNICATE WITH QUEBECKERS, AS HE HAS DURING PAST TWO MONTHS, LARGELY THROUGH PRESS CONFERENCES AND TV INTERVIEWS AND SPEECHES.
ENDERS

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